Syllabus from Torill Johnsen on

Genealogical society using several internet based tools

DIS-Norge, The Genealogy Society of Norway-DIS, is the largest association for genealogists in Norway, with nearly 10,000 members. DIS-Norge was founded in 1990.

We would like to explain how our organization is trying to combine normal genealogical research with new internet based possibilities. The mission of the association is to create a nationwide forum for family and personal history in which computers and the Internet are used as aid. Our mission includes spreading knowledge about this effort and encouraging genealogical research in Norway.

We will focus on: DISchat, Slektsforum (query board), blog, DIStreff (combining people with common ancestors), slektsforskerbasen (registry of Norwegian genealogists, where they research), genealogical resources, Gravminner i Norge (gravestones, registry and also a program developed by us) as well as information on various genealogical topics. Our concept is merging these tools to the betterment of genealogy.

DIS-Norge has entered into partnership with the LDS church in order to contribute to the full indexing of the Norwegian 1875 census. We have been working together for two years and it might be another three before we are finished. This cooperation has also given us ideas on how to make indexing in the future. We are working on a solution for indexing Norwegian church books along the same idea. DIS-Norge has an agreement with the Norwegian Archives on how we organize our contribution to this work and might soon also set up the new system for indexing in cooperation with them.

“Who do you think you are” finally came to Norway and some of our members were involved in work creating and supporting the program. We have been involved in other research activities for media – “Alt for Norge” inviting Americans to a reality show where the winner gets to meet his family.

More or less all the work going on in DIS-Norge is volunteer work. That includes functions as webmaster, moderators, project managers and indexers. It is difficult to calculate how much volunteer work this in fact is, but most of our services would have to shut down without this input.

It is important for genealogists to make contacts with others for research purposes as well as trying to find new relatives. New technology offers many opportunities:

- **DISchat** – help immediately; several genealogists are gathered through computers and often guide newcomers and those with brick-walls in their research. Every now and then also Americans are visiting with their questions about Norwegian roots. A chat is also a great opportunity for solving puzzles called “old texts”. With links from the Norwegian Digital archive we can share pages and together discuss the difficulties.

Running a chat also adds a social aspect and gives members an opportunity to get to know each other and maintain contact all over Norway. This tool is also useful for
some meeting activities.

- **Sleksforum (Query board)** has nearly 14,500 registered users – it is open to everybody interested in genealogy also foreigners. It gives help based on a geographical breakdown of Norway on one hand and on the other it gives valuable assistance on issues like emigration. This query board also opens up for discussions on methodology as well as problems reading church books and other old texts.

Various groups in the organization have their closed sections for their specific use. I.e. the board of DIS-Norge has its own section where documents can be distributed and thereby also stored and the board members can conduct discussions on various topics of their own choice.

- **Blog – lederblogg** – with daily inputs, mainly connected to activities in the organization and activities undertaken in the name of DIS-Norge. Some entries focus on genealogical issues and anything else related to genealogy. We have our member magazine – Slekt og Data – coming 4 times a year and takes apr. 6 weeks from it is finished until it is in your mailbox. This used to be the only channel of communication – a blog gives members an opportunity to find information when it is produced and when the member likes to look for information.

- **DIStreff** is a Nordic invention. It is run by genealogical associations in Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway. If you hand in a gedcom file from your own genealogical research, it returns information on others researching the same persons. In addition it also gives you help on how to find misspellings and other mistakes.

- And we are present on Facebook and Twitter, because it is important to be present, offer information and allow new generations to meet genealogy on their arena.

- **Genealogical resources** – a compilation of links of interest to genealogists. The most comprehensive for those researching Norway. It is possible for everyone to digitally inform about new links and thereby make it easy for the responsible persons to publish new links.

- **Gravminner i Norge** – gravestones – more than 2,000,000 gravestones half of them with pictures are contained. First of all this gives lots of genealogical information about many individuals living few years ago. In Norway the last census published is 1910 and it will be nearly 10 years before the next could be published. After 1925/30 it is also difficult to obtain information from sources like church books. Gravminner therefore offers information which it is difficult to obtain from other relevant sources. Secondly it gives a permanent harbor for gravestones. Stones are often taken from the grave after 20 or 30 years and demolished. Gravminner will keep them also for coming generations. Thirdly it has been and will remain to be a platform for researchers and students writing thesis. Because it contains so many gravestones it gives an opportunity to study how gravestones have developed and symbols used.

We are of the opinion that bringing all these tools together and serving various aspects of genealogy, is a good concept for our members. It gives them a variety of possibilities and lots of self-service. They may use the tool when they have time or a need for that specific assistance.